

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 10074 020649Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 PA-02 ICA-20 CIAE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 AID-05 IO-14 /068 W
-----005398 020653Z /11
R 300827Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2500

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 10074

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF, PINT, IN
SUBJECT: DANDAKARANYA REFUGEES UPDATE

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION NEW DELHI INFO BOMBAY MADRAS AND DACCA
FROM AMCONSUL CALCUTTA JUNE 29, 1978 IS REPEATED TO YOU:

QUOTE
CALCUTTA 1122

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF, PINT, IN
SUBJECT: DANDAKARANYA REFUGEES UPDATE

REF: CALCUTTA 0918

1. THE MAJOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE DANDAKARANYA REFUGEES
CASE IS THAT ON JUNE 8 IN DELHI THE UNION MINISTER FOR
REFUGEES SIKANDER BAKHT SAID THAT THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
IS WILLING TO PAY FOR THE REFUGEES' TRANSPORTATION FROM
BENGAL BACK TO THE RESETTLEMENT PROJECT IN ORISSA
AND MADHYA PRADESH AND FOR THEIR FRESH REHABILITATION
THERE. THE STATESMAN SUGGESTED 2 CRORES OF RUPEES (C.
DOLS 2.4 MILLION) AS THE AMOUNT THAT SUCH RETURN AND RE-
HABILITATION MIGHT COST. IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER BAKHT VISITED
MALKANGIRI IN ORISSA FOR A MEETING OF THE DANDAKARANYA DEVELOPMENT
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AUTHORITY THE AGENCY THROUGH WHICH SUCH FRESH REHABILITATION
WOULD BE ADMINISTERED.

2. THIS GOI OFFER, WHICH APPARENTLY WAS URGENT BY
ORISSA'S DOMINANT POLITICAL FIGURE AND UNION MINISTER,
BIJU PATNAIK, WAS WELL AS BY WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER
JYOTI BASU, IS A NEW DEPARTURE. IT IS PARTICULARLY

IN CONTRAST WITH THE PRIME MINISTER'S REPORTED
HARSH REJECTION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE
"DESERTER'S"EARLIER.

3. THERE ARE REPORTS OF CONTINUING RE-DESERTIONS BY
THOSE WHO IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER WERE PERSUADED TO
RETURN TO DANDAKARANYA. APPARENTLY A NEW PATTERN
OF DIFFUSION IS EMERGING AMONG THESE REFUGEES, WITH
A SIGNIFICANT CONCENTRATION BUILDING UP AT BURDWAR,
IN CENTRAL SOUTHERN WEST BENGAL. A SIGNIFICANT AND
ENTRENCHED SETTLEMENT OF AS MANY AS 20,000 PEOPLE
IS ALSO REPORTED ON AN ISLAND AT MARICHJHANPI IN THE
SUNDERBANS SOUTH OF HASNABAD. THIS LARGE GROUP IS
DIRECTLY UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF SATISH MANDAL OF
THE REFUGEE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION. IS IS NOT
IN A GOVERNMENT CAMP AND THEREFORE IS RECEIVING NO
REFLIEF FOOD. A STRUGGLE IS DEVELOPING BETWEEN THE
GROUP AND THE GOWB FORESTRY DEPARTMENT ABOUT WOOD-
CUTTING. DESPITE TERRIBLE PHYSICAL AND NUTRITIONAL
CONDITIONS, THIS GROUP IS APPARENTLY OBDURATE AGAINST
RETURN TO ORISSA.

4. THE VOLUNTARY RELIEF AGENCIES FOR THE MOST PART
ARE APPARENTLY STILL STAYING AWAY FROM DANDAKARANYA
REFUGEES WHO ARE OUTSIDE GOWB CAMPS, AND
ARE NOT SUPPLEMENTING IN A MAJOR WAY THE GOWB
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RELIEF EFFORT WITHIN THE CAMPS, INTO WHICH THE
GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO ATTRACT AS MANY REFUGEES AS
POSSIBLE. THE BENGALI DAILY ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA
REPORTED ON JUNE 28 THAT THE GOWB WOULD START A
RETURN PROGRAM BY SENDING TWO SPECIAL REFUGEE
TRAINS BACK TO DANDAKARANYA ON JUNE 30, FROM HASNABAD
AND DANDAKARANYA RESPECTIVELY. THE GOWB APPARENTLY
HOPES TO BEGIN BY SENDING BACK THOSE OUTSIDE GOVERNMENT
CAMPS, AND WOULD LIKE TO SEND CAMP-DWELLERS LATER.

5. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT, DESPITE THESE NOMINAL GOI
INDUCEMENTS AND ATTEMPTED GOWB PRESSURES, AND
DESPITE THE FUTHER MISERY WHICH THE RAINS MUST BE
BRINGING TO THEIR ABJECT SITUATION MOST OF THE REFUGEES
ARE NOT READY TO LEAVE BENGAL, AND WE WILL SEE
LITTLE REAL MOVEMENT. SIGNED LYDON
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BLOOD

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEES, REPORTS, REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978NEWDE10074
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780273-0165
Format: TEL
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978063/aaaaaciq.tel
Line Count: 112
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7d213a83-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 CALCUTTA 918
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2243235
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DANDAKARANYA REFUGEES UPDATE FOLLOWING SENT ACTION NEW DELHI INFO BOMBAY MADRAS AND DACCA FROM AMCONSUL CALCUTTA JUNE 29, 1978 IS REPEATED T
TAGS: SREF, PINT, IN
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7d213a83-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014